

California National Historic Trail



If you wanted to get to California in pre-railroad times, you were guaranteed an arduous trek. California emigrants faced the greatest challenges of all the pioneer emigrants of the mid-19th century. In addition to the Rockies, these emigrants faced the barren deserts of Nevada and the imposing Sierra Nevada Range. Over 200,000 gold-seekers and farmers used the California Trail to reach the gold fields and rich farmlands of California during the 1840s and 1850s, the greatest mass migration in American history.

With a variety of destinations in California, and jumping-off points in Missouri, the California Trail resembles not a single cord, but a rope frayed at both ends. Numerous cutoffs and alternate routes were tried to see which was the "best" in terms of terrain, length and sufficient water and grass for livestock.

The total California National Historic Trail system includes approximately 5,665 miles. Of this, approximately 1,100 miles of trail still exist on the ground as trail ruts, traces, and other obvious remnants. About 2,171 miles of this system cross public lands, where most of the physical evidence that still exists today is located. An estimated 320 historic sites along the trail system will eventually be available for public use and interpretation.

The mission of the Oregon-California Trails Association is to protect the historic emigrant trails legacy by promoting research, education, preservation activities, and public awareness of the trails, and to work with others to promote these causes.

For more information on the California National Historic Trail please visit:

<http://www.nps.gov/cali/index.htm>

For more information on the Oregon-California Trails Association please visit:

<http://www.canvocta.org/>

